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JAMES K. MOFFITT

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James K. Frazzitt,  
this, a youthful bit of exuberant  
writing, with a new mature  
appreciation of such as the one  
to whom it is humbly given.

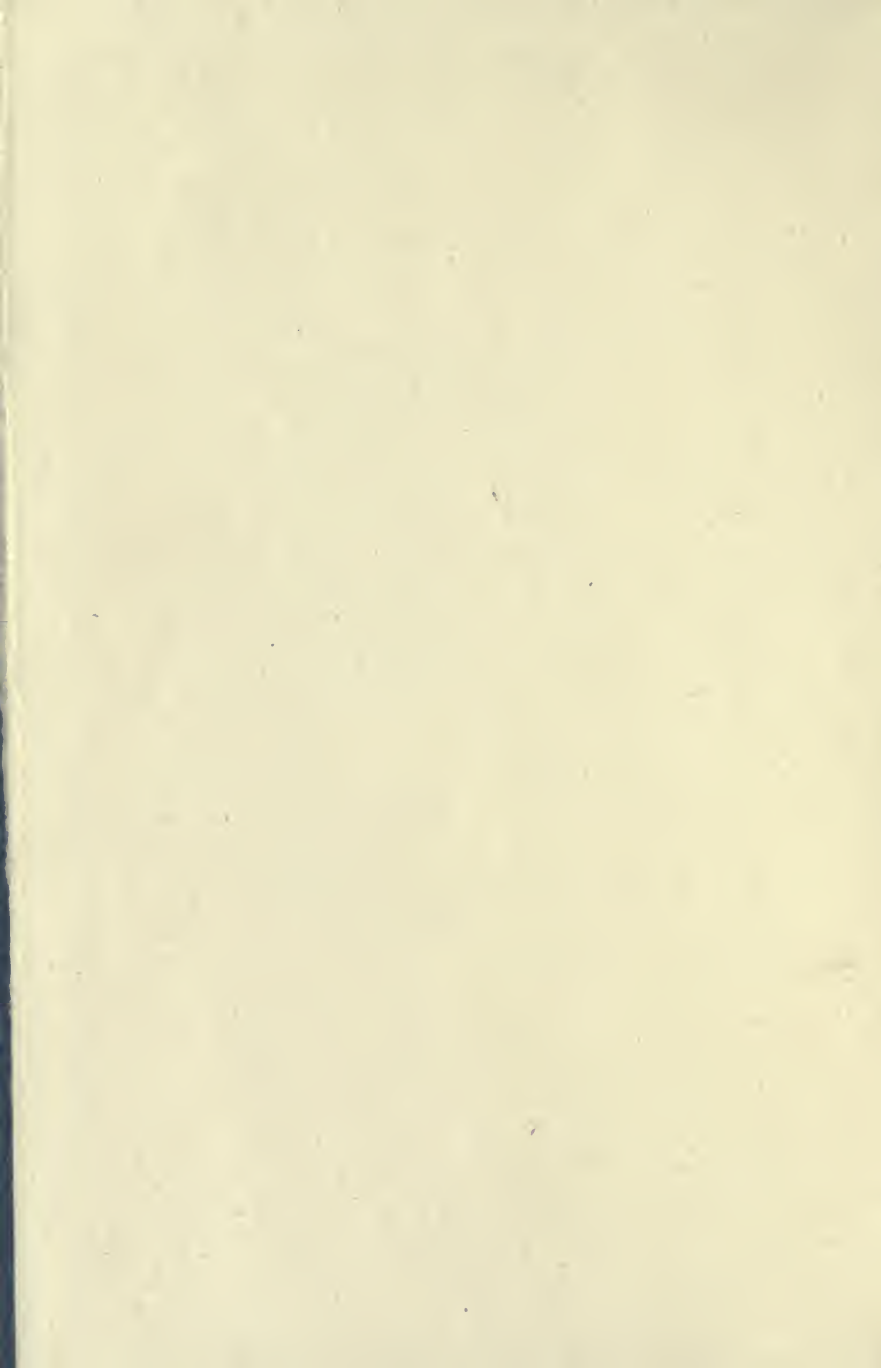
Sara Paul Wild

July, 1952.





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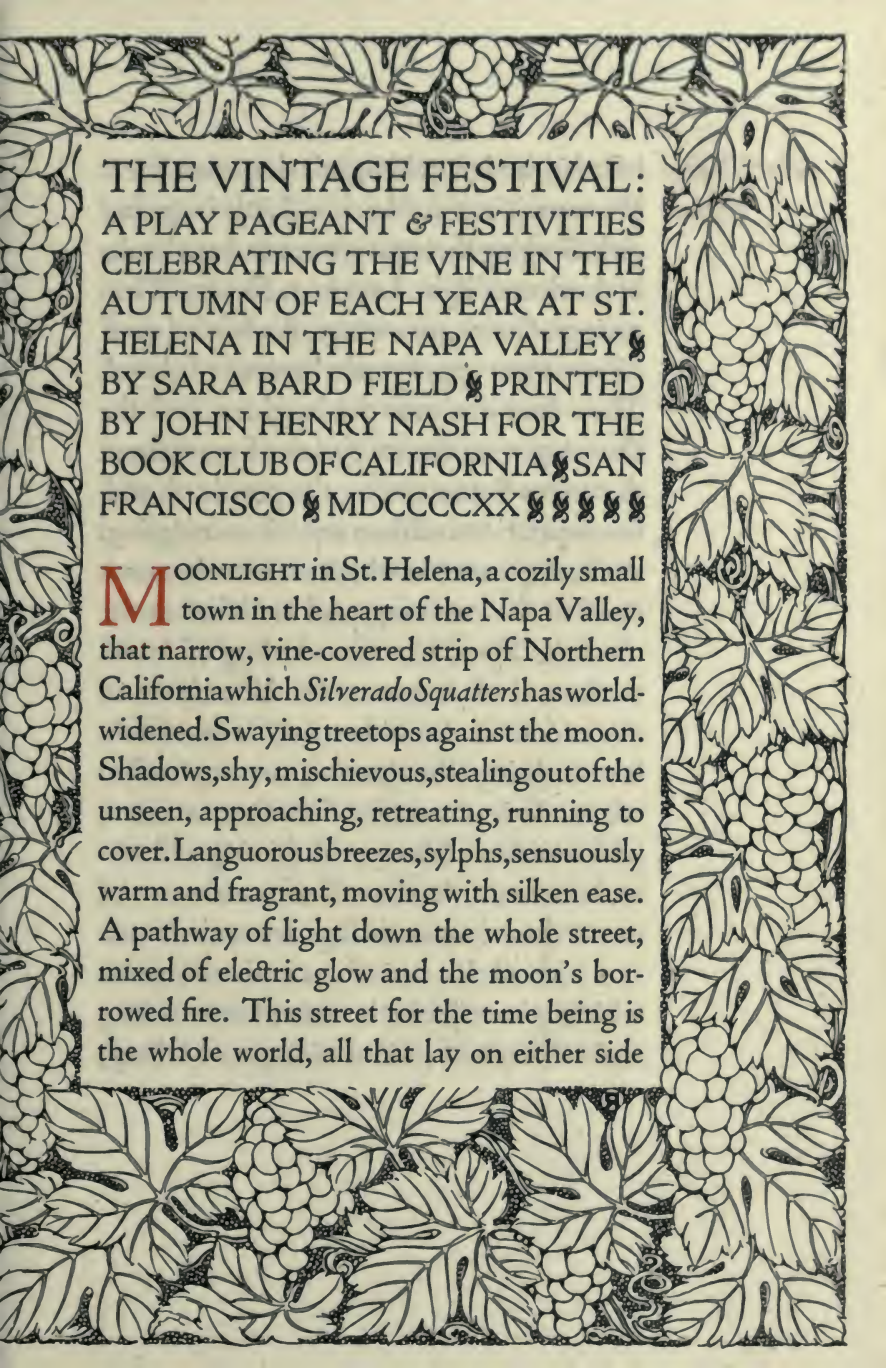


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THE VINTAGE FESTIVAL:  
A PLAY PAGEANT & FESTIVITIES  
CELEBRATING THE VINE IN THE  
AUTUMN OF EACH YEAR AT ST.  
HELENA IN THE NAPA VALLEY &  
BY SARA BARD FIELD & PRINTED  
BY JOHN HENRY NASH FOR THE  
BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA & SAN  
FRANCISCO & MDCCCCXX & & & &

**M**OONLIGHT in St. Helena, a cozily small town in the heart of the Napa Valley, that narrow, vine-covered strip of Northern California which *Silverado Squatters* has world-widened. Swaying treetops against the moon. Shadows, shy, mischievous, stealing out of the unseen, approaching, retreating, running to cover. Languorous breezes, sylphs, sensuously warm and fragrant, moving with silken ease. A pathway of light down the whole street, mixed of electric glow and the moon's borrowed fire. This street for the time being is the whole world, all that lay on either side

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of it hidden behind Night's draperies. Men. Women. Youths. Maidens. Little boys and girls. Surging throngs; groups on both banks of the river of light. Laughter. Shouts. Whisperings. Gentle answerings. A whistled tune.

From some upper porch the notes of a band. They float out over the laughter, over the shouting, over the confusion of movement. A curious flutter among the people. A sudden separation and then a quick co-mingling. A fleeting pause in which each soul attunes itself to the harmony, and each foot to the rhythm. Then, like the whirling of leaves at the call of Autumn, the dance is on in the middle of the wide street. It is a loom, human beings the shuttles, weaving broken colors. It is a stream of swift movement, eddies within eddies, yet all flowing with the main current. At the call of trombone and drum these human beings attest their oneness with all that articulates in rhythm: stars whirling in majestic choruses; waters rolling their repetitions; winds rising and falling;

birds singing in staccato notes or long, liquid trilling; insects flashing their fiery grace notes on the open sheet of Night. Part of all these the people have become. The heaviness of flesh gone, the lightness of spirit remaining. Is it that ancestral memories are tonight incarnate? Memories, æons old, when life was lived in gliding waters and in bending branches? The arching locusts which tent the street are bending tonight as they did when they housed the prophetic forerunners of mankind. They sway with these happy dancers. Movement. Music. Merriment. Beauty for the eye, the ear, for the soul's never-appeased hunger.

“Can this be America?”

There came this amazed interrogation to the Dreamer who stood on the edge of the dancing throng. There was no answer. The Dreamer by the side of the Questioner had lost all sense of locality, of dates, of names. Beauty is cosmic.

“Can this be America? Is love of Beauty part of the instinct of this Nation?”



*The Vintage Festival* Again the Questioner challenged. The Dreamer looked up and down the lighted way. Here were no gaudy streamers; no heart-breaking plaster arches; no marring artificial designs. To Nature alone had been left the scheme of decoration: a canopy of midnight blue with all the jewels of the House of Heaven flung broadcast upon it; a full moon spreading a shimmering carpet for the feet of the revelers, and the embroidery of the trees. A few dignified electroliers, a permanent addition to the town, and the simple costumes of the people were man's only contribution.

Surely it is not America. It is Egypt. A swarthy monarch has returned from the wars to carve on an obelisk the glories of his conquest. Libations are being poured to Ra, to Seb, to Isis and Osiris with music and dancing.

It is Spain. A court in old Madrid, Plaza de Isabella, All Saints' Feast, the long and regular file of a torch-light procession turn-

ing at the sound of flute and tambourine into the serpentine weavings of the dance. *The Vintage Festival*  
The splash of that fountain must come from the palace gardens; that singing laugh from a dainty senorita in velvet bodice and scarlet skirt. How warm the night! Is it jasmine we smell?

Or perhaps it is Greece. An oaken grove in her Golden Age. A Bacchanalian feast. Abandon without loss of beauty. Revelry without excess. Yes, yes, Euripides, they have come again, "the long, long dances, on through the dark till the dim stars wane."

We know the meaning of it all now. It is not real. This is a vast stage which stretches before us and we are tasting that highly concentrated essence of life in art called a drama. This must be the carnival scene before Shylock's house. Hark! Did not a paddle caress the Venetian waters? Was it Jessica called?

The band ceases. "A bully spin"; "Toot her up again"; "How's that for—"; "You're my next—"; "Yes, you did"; "There's noth-

*The Vintage Festival* ing like—" A shower of drifting word-fragments dropped on the Dreamer. Lo, it is not Egyptian speech, nor yet the tongue of Aspasia or Don Quixote. Nor is it Jessica answering Lorenzo in summer-soft Italian. It is the familiar American talk. Indeed, this is America. A September night in this twentieth century. A vintage festival in the little town of St. Helena that lies in the green Napa Valley of golden California.

For three days and nights Labor rested in this Valley of the Vine. There is little industry here other than that of vine-raising and wine-making. The grape pickers have ceased to pick; the packers to pack; the haulers to haul. The old Gray Stone Winery in the town, father of many wineries in the State, and all his busy children in the Valley, have closed their doors against the juicy loads. The cool cellars echo to never a step. The vats stand waiting. The presses idle. Silence broods.

Gold! Gold! Gold! It poured into the Valley for the holiday and centered in this little

town of St. Helena. Gold of sun by day, of *The Vintage*  
stars by night. Golden-green vineyards. Golden *Festival*  
September flowers. Golden leaves for the  
ground. Golden breezes to lift them skyward.

Joy! Joy! Joy! It came hurrying into the  
village in steam and trolley cars; in autos;  
in carriages; in wagons; on horseback and  
on foot. It brushed its wings over eyes and  
lips. It sat singing at every roadway entrance.

Grapes! Grapes! Grapes! Wagons of them.  
Tons of them. Mountains of them. Purple.  
Blue. Yellow. White. Decorating everything,  
perfuming all the corners. Given like the dew  
of heaven alike to the just and the unjust.  
Wonderful bunches such as the Hebrew spies  
brought "upon a staff between two" from  
the valley of Eschol. Crowded clusters like a  
lover's shower of passionate kisses caught and  
held love-close on the slender stems. Grapes  
with mouth-filling, satisfying names: Mus-  
catelle, Bouchet, Sultanina Rosea; Mataro,  
Monduse, Flaming Tokay. A hundred others.  
Wine! Wine! Wine! Red wine. Whitewine.



*The Vintage* Amber wine. Glasses of it. Bottles of it. Casks  
*Festival* of it. Rivers of it. Bubbling, sparkling, foaming, hastening on to the Sea of Time. Crimson wine, crushed of old by white feet treading the wine press, the white feet of Sorrow, forever bathed in scarlet Joy.

It is Morning now. Floods of sunlight lave the earth. The Festival begins its second day of glad play. All the people are anchored on the edge of the street. Eagerness everywhere. Tremulous excitement among the little children. Thrills of unwonted exhilaration among their elders. At the sound of music all heads turn in one direction. The parade is coming, headed by the local choral society. The rich notes of "Sonntagslied" cause no expressions of ignorant hatred. These people know it is fitting that those voices from the Rhineland be heard, for long ago in this region, before the curse of kaisers and junkers had blinded hearts to the essential oneness of all races, a Krug, son of Germany, his hair dyed in sunlight, married a Vallejo, daughter of Spain,



with night woven into her tresses. United forever those wide reaching vineyards of the oldest settlers of Napa Valley. United forever the traditions that throng the Mediterranean and float endlessly upon the Rhine. *The Vintage Festival*

The song ends, for songs must end. The singers pass on, and singers must ever pass on. The people stretch their necks the better to see the lovely vision which literally floats upon them. The Queen! She, whom the people have elected to reign over them during their play-time. O to be Queen of a play-time realm! Dressed in Grecian robes, surrounded by maids in like costume, she sits enthroned against white lattice work, overhung with goldenrod. She smiles at her subjects with the regal experience of nineteen summers. The people applaud. They love her. The Dreamer looks at her and also loves her. Why not? She is Helen. She is Hypatia. She is Thais. She is Marguerite. She is Guinevere. She is beautiful woman of all ages and imagination. She is the very last incarnation of Beauty.

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Purple and green of vineyards. Golden and blue of California. These are the colors everywhere: in the profusion of grapes that festoon all the floats; in the costumes of the marchers and of those who ride. If art be the revelation of the spirit of that which it portrays, surely this is art.

Bravo, native sons and daughters, poppies personified, in your yellow garments fluttering petal-wide to the breeze. Bravo, little marching maidens with the roses of Damascus and Castile blooming on your cheeks and the wine of California spilt on your lips; with butterfly ribbons of gold upon your golden heads. You are more than you seem to your own blithesome hearts or to the cheering crowd. You are the embodiment of a spirit. You are the incarnation of a nameless glory.

Tramp of feet. Clatter of hoofs. Champing at the bits of impatient horses. A symbol passes. It is a float in two sections. The first, a group of stately trees, a tent in the midst,

skins of animals hung about. An Indian sits smoking before the smouldering fire. The inscription below reads: "Before the Coming of the White Man." The second section is the same spot cleared. Now sky and soil stand frankly face to face. Even rows of the vine make the land green. Bunches of blue and purple, shadows caught from the misted evening mountains and wrought by the sun into fruit, show among the leaves. The float is named: "After the Coming of the White Man."

An old man sighs and smiles in unison. "I cleared a spot like that," he volunteers, his eyes following the float tenderly, "long before the phylloxera came."

"The phylloxera! Was it an animal or a tribe?"

The old man laughs, a rich laugh, steeped in the juices of his vineyard. "Naw, it was an insect. A pest like them things Moses turned loose on that Pharaoh. Tiny, like a louse. It eats the root of the vine. It was

*The Vintage Festival* fierce once. It wiped out sixteen thousand acres for us, a lot for this little valley."

"And the people—what did you do?" The Dreamer was eagerly linking Nature's cruelty with human destiny.

"Do!" There was scorn unspeakable in the monosyllable. "Do! We done what San Francisco done after the fire. We began again. We planted new vineyards. Only we had to experiment for a resistant stock. We found it—a vine so tough the vermin can't penetrate it. It was grown in the Missouri Valley, taken to France for seasoning of that soil and climate and brought back to us. We graft every vine into it. No more phylloxera. Look at that now. Ain't it clever?"

The Dreamer looked. Uncle Sam in the person of a small wide-eyed lad was joining the hands of two wee lassies whose diminutive sweetness symbolized by way of contrast the Atlantic and Pacific made one through the fusion of their waters in the Panama Canal. But the Dreamer was still thinking



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of that other union so picturesquely drawn by the old man's words: the fusion of saps from France and California — sap, mysterious distillation of skies and dews and air and sun. In it are the dreams of sleeping Winter, the thrill of waking Spring, the work of fructifying Summer and the fulfilment of ripening Autumn. Is not the hope of the world symbolized in this vineyard story? Do we not dream of a race of sturdy men and women, born in this land of the co-mingled blood of many people to become a resistant stock to the parasites who destroy the vine of Universal Happiness? Is it not, as the best of the Past which is the Old World mingles with the best of the Present which is the New Land, that peaceful warriors shall be born to take destruction captive and feed the children of the earth the wine of joy? Gone barren deserts of despair; the blight of poverty; the sere of unsatisfied longing; the mad waste of war; gone blasted buds of hope and aspiration. Only the withered leaves of past agonies left to be scattered and

*The Vintage* destroyed by the winds of forgetfulness. Gone  
*Festival* forever human phylloxera. The land brave in  
new vintage of the soul, continually renewed.  
Even so come, lovely and distant morning.

The procession passes into ending. The hours wing away. At evening in the little theatre where scenes of the Isles of Greece have been skillfully painted as a background, the work of this people blossoms into an allegorical drama. The beautiful Queen is on her throne. Ceres, Pomona, and Flora leave their ancestral land beside the Ægean and mingle this night with gods and goddesses of later birth and modern name. The Evil Spirit known as the Knocker whose pleasure is to cast reproach on all divinities of earth, appears with Future and Prosperity caught in her cobweb. She is overcome and driven from the Valley by St. Helena. Future and Prosperity are released and spread their blessings broadcast. The goddesses at their bidding offer choicest gifts to the Queen. Climate brings Rain and Sun; Flora, the Daisy

and Rose; Ceres, Wheat and Corn; Pomona, Fruit and Wine. Prosperity makes miraculous increase of all things and Future leads in Happiness. All of these parts are acted by the loveliest girls and youths of the Valley. To simple airs they dance the old Greek dances ending in a modern butterfly whirl, all joy, all swift emotion. The lines of the allegory are in lyrical blank verse. At the very last Bacchus appears and the Queen abdicates her throne in his favor to the tumult of great revelry.

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What gentle spirit, the Dreamer wonders, has guided this communal expression? Someone whose roots are in Hellenic beauty but whose flower is of the present. A teacher, the Dreamer is told, a loved instructor of the village known to the people of the whole Valley. His name? Gardner de Veuve. Well, it is plain now. His name tells the story. He is French, born of that race which is the spiritual child of Ancient Greece, curious, beauty-loving, shaping thought to forms of beauty

*The Vintage Festival* and becoming by that divine right arbiter of the world's taste. This Gardner de Veuve, poet and artist, wrote the lines of the allegorical drama, superintended the painting of the scenery, helped in the design of costumes and floats, but above all—and herein rests his greater claim to honor—he had the genius of engaging the people in a whole-souled participation. He called to all the folk of the region saying: "Come, this is your life speaking in picture and in play. You must all take some part in your Festival."

So they came from Napa at the one end of the Valley, from Calistoga at the other where the ghost of the loved Stevenson still lingers, and from all the vineyards and tiny villages in between. The men brought the fruit of the field and the product of their wineries for the big exhibit; the women, the results of their fireside toil, preserves and jellies and pickles. The children contributed specimens of their school work. Young and old rode in the floats or marched in the parade. On the stage girls



and boys make virgin efforts while the crowd in the theatre is active with applause. The theatre is filled to overflowing. The whole world is there; all of them a people who have befriended the Vine: Italians with associations of Lachryma Christi and Chianti; Portuguese with old Madeira in the blood; French, about whom is wrapped the aroma of Burgundy and in whom is the sparkle of Champagne; Germans who gave the world the delicate wines of the Rhine and Moselle; Native Sons and Daughters in whose veins is a new-mixed wine and in whose hearts, thank the gods, the heritage of laughter. The spirit of youth is here though wrinkles and white hair are in abundance. Carnival caps adorn each head: Grandmother's silver locks and the Baby's bewitching baldness. Now Bacchus makes a jesting speech. He is round and fat and jolly as Bacchus should be. He bids the people be merry as Bacchus should do. They shout and applaud.

To the Dreamer a mist seems to wrap the

*The Vintage Festival* stage, a delicate, rosy mist through which the moving figures become more suggestively lovely. It is made of the crimson light of wine. Wine! Wine! Wine! Age old. Made by Noah, used by Abram and Melchizedek, poured as libations to the gods when Christ was a secret of the far, far future. Wine, drunk by the Epicureans as the tangible touch with the goodness of things seen. Wine, sipped by the Mystics as the symbol of union with things unseen. Wine, making the blood of Christ as it had been the blood of Dionysos. Wine, scarlet ribbon, binding into one great sheaf all races, religions, festivities, literatures, customs—all times.

Suddenly there is in the midst of the rosy clouds a multitude of the departed, "whose music is the gladness of the world." It is the company of the Poets of the Ages. The Dreamer heard the voice of one David singing to the sound of psaltery, "Wine that maketh glad the heart of man"; of Solomon singing to the Shulamite damsel:

“Let us get up early to the vineyards.  
Let us see whether the vine hath budded  
And its blossom be open  
And the pomegranate be in flower.  
There will I give thee my love.”

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An unnamed voice, hoary with age from  
the Indus sang:

“Thou Indra oft hast quaffed  
With keen delight our Soma draught.  
All gods the luscious Soma love,  
But thou all other gods above.”

Arabia, Egypt, Assyria, and the ancient  
peoples behind the veil of history lent voices  
to the choring and there were strains from  
Anacreon, Meleager, Horace, Omar, Villon,  
Shakespeare, Milton, Heine, Burns, Keats,  
and many nameless ones, some mere echoes  
from distant time.

Not in vain do they gather here this night,  
saluters, poetic, of the storied wine. A thing,  
prophetic, is transpiring, a thing to rejoice all  
the vineyard gods: Soma, Dionysos, Silenus,  
Bacchus. America, crowned with shekels,  
girded with steel, shod with iron, whose face

*The Vintage Festival* is scarred with poverty, whose breath is black smoke, whose voice is steam, here steps forth in a new guise. A garland of grapes is about her brow; a crimson girdle on her loins, her feet golden sandaled, her face smiling to the stars, and her breath the perfume of the "henna flowers in the vineyards of Engedi." Her voice is laughter and song. For a single moment she takes her place with every nation which has dropped a star of beauty on the arch of time. She is bound to them by the crimson ribbon. Well may the invisible host sing and the gods be glad. Well may these people eat the fruit of pleasure and drink the wine of gladness. An Industry, permeated with enough of beauty and romance to become articulate in poetry, song, and dancing, is this hour speaking. An Industry is laughing. Think of it! An Industry is at play. What other form of Labor laughs? Does steel-manufacture, carried on in the heat of hell where men "sweating like the damned run to and fro"? Does mining, that work



with sun and stars sifted out and Death hovering at the elbow in the gloom? Could any Labor laugh which is done in the reproach of a factory or the disgrace of a sweat shop? Have even the growing of the golden wheat or the fluffy cotton or the industry of the fragrant orchards spoken in music and pageant, in merriment and poetry? Could any one of these evoke an expression of such universal beauty, make thought walk back over Time's loveliest vistas to the harpings of Callicles, the flutings of Theocritus, or the tinkling of Salome's tambourine?

What is lacking in all these others that the Industry of the Vine possesses in such high degree? Romance! Romance, pressed out with the first grapes, spilled into the first pair of ruddy lips. Traditions. Legends. Religious rites. Courtly ceremonies. Humble hospitalities. Festal follies. Nuptial feasts. Myriad libations. Launching of ships. Pledgings to kings, to knights, to fair ladies, to elusive Fortune and inconstant Love. Poetry. Song.

*The Vintage Festival* A million hopes. Ten million smiles. Twice ten million heart throbs. These live again in every vineyard — in Eschol, in Burgundy, in Italy, in Greece, in California. These mystic and precious things, the heritage of humanity, are stored in every vat, made captive in every bottle, to burst forth again with the outflow into the crystal glass, to be poured again into man's veins, to become the language his dumb soul cannot utter, the universal symbol for his unspoken emotions; to live as long as the sun kisses the earth's bosom and the dews bathe it.

It is this which the humblest of the people have felt in their vineyards and in their wineries. It is this which they vaguely know makes this festival possible. It is this which they sense is being said in these three days and nights of lovely revelry. It is this which makes Beauty walk boldly through their midst.

Somewhere, now, a woman's clear soprano is added to the invisible choring, linking the song of the past with that of the now:

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O wreathed vine, how long have you been growing?

O crimson stream, how long have you been flowing?

Before the first red lips knew thirst  
When infant winds were blowing.

O magic juice within the purple chalice,  
Whence do you come to slay our care and malice?

I come, I run from Dew, from Sun,  
My gold and azure palace.

O never touched by any breath of sadness,  
What is the mixture of your godly madness?

Hope, Laughter, Joy without alloy;  
I am all liquid gladness.

The song ends in a triumphant laughing assertion. The mists recede. The vision fades. Around the Dreamer there is the insistent stir of the people streaming out to dance again under the moon. The stars light up the incense of new dreams. Lovers tell each other secrets older than wine. Mothers watch their sons choose the fairest partners and their daughters lure the youths to the choice. Fathers talk in groups of the propitious weather and the goodly crops. Lo, they too are pouring libations to the gods. Music. Merriment. Memories. Light. Laughter. Love. Wine and

*The Vintage Festival* Witchery. Over all is the voice of one who knew life deeply singing:

“Ah, fill the cup:—what boots it to repeat  
How Time is slipping underneath our Feet:  
Unborn To-morrow, and dead Yesterday,  
Why fret about them if To-day be sweet!”



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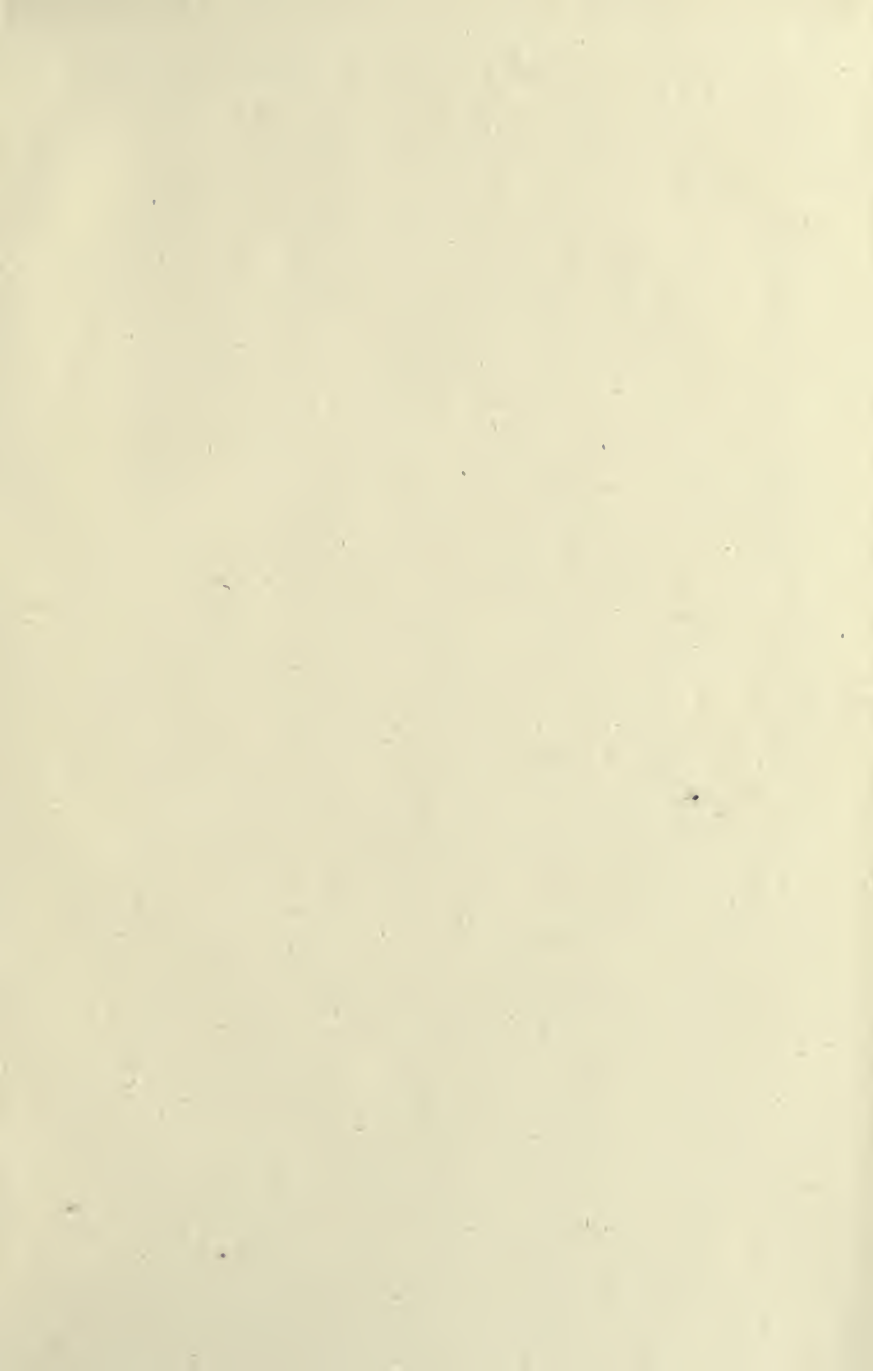




























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